

Integrated Resource Plan Guidelines Issued in 2002

An Important Component of the SE PA Groundwater Protected Area Program

The commission in April 2002 issued guidelines for the preparation of Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs) by municipalities under the DRBC's Southeastern Pennsylvania Ground Water Protected Area (GWPA) regulations.

Numerical ground water withdrawal limits were established by the DRBC in 1998 and 1999 for each of the 76 subbasins that fall either entirely or partially within the Protected Area. The goal is to prevent depletion of ground water and protect the interests and rights of lawful users of the same water source, as well as balance and reconcile alternative and conflicting uses of limited water resources in the region.

However, the GWPA regulations provide that the commission may revise a withdrawal limit to provide *additional protection* for a subbasin in accordance with more stringent requirements contained in an IRP adopted and implemented by all municipalities in the subbasin and incorporated into each municipality's comprehensive plan.

No subbasin withdrawal limits have yet been lowered by the DRBC under the IRP provision in the GWPA regulations, but the commission continues to have IRP-related discussions with a number of interested municipalities located in Bucks, Chester, and Montgomery counties. The Montgomery County Planning Commission worked on the development of a prototype IRP for the Swamp-Scioto Creeks Subbasin in 2002-2003, with funding assistance from the DRBC and Pennsylvania.

The issuance of the IRP guidelines in 2002 was the culmination of a process that began in 1998 when the commission created the Water Management Advisory Committee and asked it to identify guidelines by which municipalities could develop IRPs.

The guidelines, as well as additional GWPA information, can be found on the DRBC web site at <http://www.nj.gov/drbc/gwpapage.htm>.

Integrated resource planning is a comprehensive approach to water resource management that evaluates water resources availability and demands on a watershed level. The process encourages planning to meet multiple objectives and evaluate competing uses of water resources.

The DRBC, because of its unique structure and powers, is sometimes called upon to carry out programs that would be difficult, if not impossible, for the basin states or the federal government to accomplish on their own. An example is the management of the GWPA.

The Protected Area was established by the commission in 1980 at the request of Pennsylvania, which lacked the regulatory authority to carry out the program. The move was made after it became evident that development was negatively impacting ground water levels in the area.

SE PA Groundwater Protected Area

